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SPEECH

OF THE

HON. T. BUTLER KING, OF GEORGIA,

ON

THE OREGON QUESTION:

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES,

February 9, 1846.

WASHINGTON:

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SPEECH.

Mr. KING rose and addressed the committee during the hour as follows :

Mr. CHAIRMAN : In view of the correspondence which has recently passed between the Secretary of State and the British Minister, I shall not offer the amendment, (imbodying a proposition for arbitration,) as I intended, to the resolutions now under consideration. The proposition to settle by arbitration the rights of the United States and Great Britain to the territory of Oregon, and establish an equitable line of partition, having been made in all its forms by her Britannic Majesty's Minister, and been peremptorily, and, as I think, cavalierly, rejected by the President, that mode of adjusting this great controverted question seems to be at an end. Arbitration is one of the most ancient modes known to civilized nations of settling difficult and embarrassing disputes. It is sanctioned, in all its forms, by the law of nations, as founded on the laws of Nature. It has been resorted to in all times by those who wished to mete out that justice to others which they desired should be meted out to themselves. The President of the United States has declared, or permitted his Secretary of State to declare, that the territorial rights of the United States cannot be submitted to arbitration. Who has ever desired the President to submit to arbitration the acknowledged, clearly undisputed, territorial rights of the United States? It is, sir, precisely because our rights in that territory are not clearly defined with respect to limits, and that the title to a very considerable portion of it has been claimed by Great Britain for more than half a century, as against Spain, from whom we profess to derive our own title in no very inconsiderable degree, and that this Government has acknowledged, for the space of seven-and-twenty years, that Great Britain has rights in Oregon, that I supposed that this was a question, of all others which has ever presented itself for adjustment between this Government and that, which, in its complicated character and momentous consequences, could be most properly and equitably adjusted by arbitration, and which, from its very nature, pointed to that as the most honorable and suitable mode of settlement. The President, however, seems to think differently. By assuming the broad ground that our title to the entire territory is "clear and unquestionable," and that our

rights there are not "to be a proper subject for arbitration," he seems to say, in language not to be misunderstood, to the Government of Great Britain, that, as far as he is concerned, or can control the action of this Government, the question of territorial rights is settled, and that any concessions which may hereafter be made on our part, if any ever shall be, may be regarded as an evidence of our liberality, and not as springing from a conviction of the justness of her rights, or the validity of her title to any portion of the territory in dispute.

I am not, sir, disposed to present an argument with respect to our title to Oregon. I shall not even say to what extent our title is better than that of Great Britain, or how far it can be sustained by all the evidences which have been or can be adduced. In my judgment, this question ought not to have been brought into this House. This is not the place to discuss questions of this nature. They properly belong to the Executive and the Senate. They are, under the Constitution, the treaty-making power. It is very difficult, if not impossible, for any man to present an argument here which shall in the slightest degree admit the force of British rights in Oregon, without bringing upon himself the imputation of having more or less compromised those of his own country. These delicate and complicated questions should be left in the hands of diplomats, and settled by negotiation; or, if that finally fail, the next and the only peaceable resort, as it seems to me, is to submit them to a tribunal, constituted with a proper and just regard to the spirit of our institutions, for arbitration. If our title to that territory is, as has been asserted, "clear and unquestionable," all argument and negotiation are at an end, and this House, therefore, has been wasting time in misdirected and useless discussion. Our deliberations should have been directed to a vigorous preparation for the maintenance of rights which have been thus boldly and unqualifiedly asserted. But, sir, while this declaration has been uttered and repeated by the Executive and his friends upon this floor, they have staring them in the face the fact that he himself has offered to settle this controverted question by yielding up to Great Britain almost one-half of the entire territory—thus denying and admitting, almost in the same breath, that she has rights west of the Rocky Mountains, below the latitude of $54^{\circ} 40'$. If Great Britain has no rights in Oregon, why has he offered to concede to her almost one-half of it? If she has rights there, the delicate and difficult question to be determined is, where do our rights cease, and where do hers begin? That cannot be decided by argument in this House, by debating the question now

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before us. If we pass the notice in any form, the question of boundary must finally be adjusted by negotiation, arbitration, or the sword. I am therefore, sir, opposed to arguing the question of title here, surrounded as it is by difficulties, which must, whatever may be said in this House, be finally arranged in one of the modes I have stated.

The President of the United States, in asserting "that he does not believe the territorial rights of this nation to be a proper subject for arbitration," has assumed that to be a fact which no one will dispute, with respect to what are known and acknowledged to be our territorial limits; but it was for the purpose of ascertaining what those limits are in the territory of Oregon that I proposed to submit them to arbitration.

The President, in his message of December last, informed us that "all attempts at compromise had failed," and called upon Congress "to consider what measures it might be proper to adopt for the maintenance of our just title to the Oregon territory." Now, sir, it would seem to me to be wise, in the first place, to ascertain what our "just rights" are, before we proceed to maintain them in the way indicated in the message. Arbitration seemed to me the only mode which could be resorted to short of war. This, as we have seen, the President has rejected, on the ground that our "territorial rights" are "not a proper subject" for that mode of adjustment. In taking this ground, the Executive has not only departed from the long-tried and well-established custom of civilized nations, but he has taken a ground which has never been before assumed by the United States. This Government has, on three several occasions, submitted questions of territorial rights and limits to the decision of commissioners or arbitrators. By the fifth article of the treaty concluded in 1794, commonly called Jay's treaty, the question whether the river St. Croix should form the eastern boundary of Maine was submitted to commissioners, to be appointed in the following manner, viz:

"One commissioner shall be named by his Majesty, one by the President of the United States, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate thereof, and the said two commissioners shall agree on the choice of a third, or, if they cannot so agree, they shall each propose one person, and, of the two names so proposed, one shall be drawn by lot, in the presence of the original commissioners. And the three commissioners so appointed shall be sworn impartially to examine and decide the said question according to such evidence as shall respectively be laid before them on the part of the British Government and of the United States. And the said commissioners shall meet at Halifax, and shall have power to adjourn to such other places as they shall think fit. They shall have power to appoint a secretary, and to employ surveyors, or such other persons as they shall judge necessary. The said commissioners shall, by a declaration under their hands and seals, decide what river is the river St. Croix intended by the treaty, [the treaty of 1783.] The said declaration shall contain a description of the said river, and shall particulariz

the latitude and longitude of its mouth and of its source. Duplicates of this declaration, and of the statements of their accounts, and of the journal of their proceedings, shall be delivered by them to the agent of his Britannic Majesty, and to the agent of the United States, who may be respectively appointed and authorized to manage the business on behalf of their respective Governments. And both parties agree to consider such decision as final and conclusive, so as that the same shall never thereafter be called into question, or made the subject of dispute or difference between them."

Now, sir, these commissioners or arbitrators were to decide a question which involved the right to a large and valuable portion of the territory of the State of Maine; and under their decision, which was not called in question by Great Britain, Maine now holds that territory. So likewise, under the fourth article of the treaty of peace concluded at Ghent in 1814, our right to certain islands in the Bay of Passamaquoddy was submitted to arbitration. That article is as follows:

"Whereas it was stipulated by the second article of the treaty of peace of 1783, between his Britannic Majesty and the United States of America, that the boundary of the United States should comprehend all islands within twenty leagues of any part of the shores of the United States, and lying between lines to be drawn due east from the points where the aforesaid boundaries between Nova Scotia on the one part and East Florida on the other, shall respectively touch the Bay of Fundy and the Atlantic ocean, excepting such islands as now are, or heretofore have been, within the limits of Nova Scotia: And whereas the several islands in the Bay of Passamaquoddy, which is part of the Bay of Fundy, and the island of Menour, in the said Bay of Fundy, are claimed by the United States as being comprehended within their aforesaid boundaries, which said islands are claimed as belonging to his Britannic Majesty, as having been at the time of and previous to the aforesaid treaty of 1783 within the limits of the Province of Nova Scotia: In order, therefore, finally to decide upon these claims, it is agreed that it shall be referred to two commissioners, to be appointed in the following manner, viz: one commissioner shall be appointed by his Britannic Majesty, and one by the President of the United States, by and with the consent of the Senate thereof, and the said two commissioners so appointed shall be sworn *impartially to examine and decide upon the said claims according to such evidence as shall be laid before them on the part of his Britannic Majesty and of the United States, respectively.* The said commissioners shall meet at Saint Andrew's, in the Province of New Brunswick, and shall have power to adjourn to such other place or places as they shall think fit. The said commissioners shall, by a declaration or report under their hands and seals, decide to which of the two contracting parties the several islands aforesaid do respectively belong, in conformity with the true intent of the said treaty of peace of 1783. And, if the said commissioners shall agree in their decision, both parties shall consider such decision as final and conclusive. It is further agreed that, in the event of the two commissioners differing upon all or any of the matters referred to them, or in the event of both or either of said commissioners refusing or declining, or wilfully omitting to act as such, they shall make, jointly or separately, a report or reports, as well to the Government of his Britannic Majesty as that of the United States, stating in detail the points on which they differ, and the grounds upon which their respective opinions have been formed, or the grounds on which they or either of them have so refused, declined, or omitted to act. And his Britannic Majesty and the Government of the United States hereby agree to refer the report or reports of the said commissioners to some friendly Sovereign or State, to be then named for that purpose, and who shall be requested to decide upon the differences which may be stated in the said report or reports, or upon the report of one commissioner, together with

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the grounds upon which the other commissioner shall have refused, declined, or omitted to act, as the case may be. And if the commissioner, so refusing, declining, or omitting to act, shall also wilfully omit to state the grounds upon which he has so done, in such manner that the said statement may be referred to such friendly Sovereign or State, together with the report of such other commissioner, then such Sovereign or State shall decide *ex parte* upon the said report alone. And his Britannic Majesty and the Government of the United States engage to consider the decision of such friendly Sovereign or State to be final and conclusive on all the matters so referred."

The decision of the commissioners appointed under this article was regarded by both Governments as final and conclusive, and under it the United States acquired the islands of Moose, Frederick, and Dudley, in the Bay of Passamaquoddy. Other articles of this treaty provide for the settlement of our title with respect to various other portions of territory, and under the commissions appointed for that purpose we obtained various islands in the St. Lawrence and the Northern Lakes. These facts, I think, sir, are sufficient to show that the President of the United States, in assuming the ground that our territorial rights or limits are not the proper subjects of arbitration, has not only departed from what has been the uniform practice of this Government in all cases of disputed territory and boundary lines, but he holds a doctrine which is extremely dangerous to the peace and honor of the nation. Holding, as he does, in his own hands the absolute control over our foreign negotiations, it would be only necessary for him, if he desired to throw the country into a war, to embarrass them with frivolous pretences, for the purpose of finally suspending or breaking them off, and then declaring that, as negotiation had failed, the nation must sustain him in an appeal to arms for the purpose of acquiring any portion of territory to which he, for party purposes, may have thought proper to declare our title to be "clear and unquestionable." It has been a maxim of this Government, almost coeval with its foundation, that we should "ask nothing but that which is right, and submit to nothing that is wrong." This maxim is sustained not only by the spirit but by the letter of the law of nations. Vattel says, (chapter 18:)

"The disputes that arise between nations or their rulers originate either from contested rights or injuries received. A nation ought to preserve the rights which belong to her, and the care of her own safety and glory forbids her to submit to injuries. But, in fulfilling the duty which she owes to herself, she must not forget her duty to others." "She is therefore bound to render to each nation what is her due—to leave her in the peaceable enjoyment of her rights," &c.

The same author declares that—

"Arbitration is a very reasonable mode, and one that is perfectly conformable to the law of Nature, for the decision of every dispute which does not directly in-

terest the safety of the nation. Though the claim of justice may be mistaken by the arbitrator, it is still more to be feared that it will be overpowered in an appeal to the sword."

"In doubtful cases, which do not involve essential points, if one of the parties will not accede either to a conference, an accommodation, a compromise, or an arbitration, the other has only the last resource for the defence of himself and his rights—an appeal to the sword; and he has justice on his side in taking up arms against so untractable an adversary. For, in doubtful cases, we can only demand all the reasonable methods of elucidating the question, and of deciding or accommodating the dispute."

Hence it will be seen, Mr. Chairman, that the President, in taking the course he has thought proper to pursue, has arrayed against him not only the former practice of this Government, but the high and unquestionable authority of the law of nations. The correspondence between the Secretary of State and the British Minister, which has been submitted to us by the President, is certainly of a most extraordinary character. Mr. Pakenham, in his letter to Mr. Buchanan of the 27th December, 1845, in submitting the first proposition to arbitrate the question in controversy, says: "Her Majesty's Government think that a resort to arbitration is the most prudent, and perhaps the only feasible step which could be taken, and the best calculated to allay the existing effervescence of popular feeling, which might otherwise greatly embarrass the efforts of both Governments to preserve the friendly understanding between the two nations." Mr. Buchanan, in his reply, rejects the proposition, upon the ground that "the British Government do not propose to refer to arbitration the question of title to the Oregon territory claimed by the two Powers, respectively," but "merely the partition or 'equitable division' of the territory between them;" thus clearly leaving it to be inferred that the President would be willing to submit the question of title to arbitration. It is quite evident that this was Mr. Pakenham's impression; and accordingly, on the 16th January, 1846, he addresses to Mr. Buchanan another communication, in which he proposes to submit the title to the Oregon territory to arbitration, and, waiving his first proposition to submit it to some friendly Sovereign or State, he suggests that "there might be a mixed commission, with an umpire appointed by common consent, or there might be a board, composed of the most distinguished civilians and jurists of the time, appointed in such a manner as should bring all pending questions to the decision of the most enlightened, impartial, and independent minds."

This proposition, sir, which seems to have been evidently invited by Mr. Buchanan's letter of the 3d January, 1846—this proposition, which it was so honorable to make, and, in

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my judgment, most unwise and dangerous to reject, is, in Mr. Buchanan's reply of the 4th instant, not only rejected, but treated in a manner wholly unbecoming an American statesman; and the only reason assigned—if reason it can be called—in his whole letter, is, that the President "does not believe the territorial rights of this nation to be a proper subject for arbitration." To be sure, sir, he argues that the territory in dispute is more valuable to us than to Great Britain. This might be a very good reason, if the question were whether we should purchase it or not; but I can hardly suppose the Secretary could seriously believe that Great Britain would regard it as a very sound argument why she should yield any portion of the territory which she believes honestly belongs to her. Such reasons as these, sir, assigned by the Secretary of State and sanctioned by the President, seem to lead to but one conclusion; which is, that, whatever their professions may be to the contrary, their secret designs and intentions are to throw this country into a war, not for the purpose of acquiring Oregon, (for that would soon be lost sight of in the smoke and din of the conflict,) but for the purpose of covering up their own party purposes and achieving their political ends.

How long is it, sir, since the assertion and the discovery have been made, that our title to all Oregon is "clear and unquestionable?" The Baltimore Convention, which nominated Mr. Polk for the Presidency, first sent forth this declaration. I fancy there are but few persons who did not then regard it as having been made for party purposes, and not as a grave assertion, to be sustained by all the hazards and calamities of war. It assumed a more startling character when repeated by the President in his inaugural address. It then came upon the country like a clap of thunder from a clear sky. It was not even at that time supposed that it would be followed up and hurried through all the forms of diplomatic correspondence with a haste and in a spirit which seems to preclude the possibility of an amicable or equitable adjustment. This is the effect, sir, of throwing our foreign relations into party contests for political power. Those struggles have hitherto been confined to questions of domestic policy. Having exhausted almost every means of party strife, they have now seized hold of those questions in which other nations are concerned, and which may lead us to the most disastrous consequences. After having admitted, for the space of seven-and-twenty years, and by the negotiation and ratification of two solemn treaties, that Great Britain has rights in Oregon, the President and his party come

before the country with a declaration, which is not sustained by the discovery of any new evidences of title in our favor, that our title to the whole country is "clear and unquestionable." If the President is sincere in this declaration—if he really believes our title to be so much better than that of Great Britain, why can he refuse—why does he seem to fear—to submit it to investigation, and to the decision of enlightened and honest commissioners or arbitrators? His refusing to do so seems to imply a want of confidence in his own declarations. That our title to that territory has been disputed ever since we laid claim to it, is well known to him and to all the world. That Great Britain would have declared war in 1792 against Spain, if she had not consented promptly to restore to their possessions and property the British settlers on Vancouver's, Island, is equally well known. That Great Britain, in our negotiations with her in 1817 and 1818, and 1826 and 1827, maintained with great force and unyielding pertinacity her right to settle and occupy that territory, can be seen in the diplomatic correspondence upon that subject of those periods; and the very best that she would consent to do was to allow to the United States an equal right to settle and occupy, or what is termed in the conventions the right of joint occupation. And now, Mr. Chairman, with all proper respect to the learned and venerable gentleman from Massachusetts, (Mr. ADAMS,) I should like to ask him a question. I desire, sir, to ask what his opinion is of our title to the Oregon territory? Whether in his judgment it is "clear and unquestionable," as has been asserted by the Executive?

Mr. ADAMS (the floor being yielded for the purpose) said: To say that the title is "clear and unquestionable," is to say that which is susceptible of two meanings—one relating solely to the question of right and wrong, and the other relating to the opinions of others. According to the construction we give to "clear and indisputable," in relation to the question of right and wrong, I say that our title is "clear and unquestionable." I will add one or two words more. That our title in the Oregon territory is not indisputable, or clear, is answered plainly in the fact that it is *disputed*. The gentleman has told us that it has been disputed for twenty-seven years. I cannot deny it. But if every thing which is disputed by the Government of Great Britain is disputable, then I should be under the necessity of changing the meaning of the word.

Mr. KING. Then, sir, why did the gentleman not give that definition when he was Secretary of State in 1817 and 1818? Why did he not assert, as he now does, that our title is clear

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to the whole territory of Oregon? Why did he compromise it by virtually admitting that Great Britain had rights in Oregon equal to our own? And above all, sir, why did he not, when President of the United States, and having the control of the negotiations in 1826 and 1827, assert, if he so believed, that our title was clear and unquestionable? I have ever been accustomed to regard the opinions of that gentleman, on all questions growing out of our foreign relations, as of the highest authority. His long experience in the diplomatic intercourse, his extensive knowledge of the history and of the laws of nations, give to his opinions a weight, in all matters of that nature, which can be claimed by few in this or any other country. And especially, sir, his minute and accurate information respecting all the circumstances that go to make up our title to Oregon, whatever it may be, have led me to regard his opinions upon that subject as entitled to the greatest respect and consideration. But I confess that the present course of that gentleman fills me with surprise and astonishment, unsettles my opinions of his wisdom and justice, and leads me to apprehend that motives which are not avowed have brought him in conflict with his former acts and opinions. He is now in favor of giving notice to Great Britain for the termination of the convention for the joint occupation of Oregon, and I understand him to say that he will not vote one dollar of appropriations for military defences, unless the resolution for the notice shall pass; and yet he professes not to regard it as a war measure. The resolutions now before the committee are not, strictly speaking, a war measure; but, sir, it is proper to consider them in connexion with the bill which has been introduced from the Committee on Territories, which proposes to organize a territorial government west of the Rocky Mountains, and to extend our laws over all Oregon. One measure inevitably leads to the other. If we abrogate the convention which provides for the joint occupancy of the territory, it will become necessary to extend our *exclusive* jurisdiction over our citizens there, at the end of the twelve months' notice. If we should give "the notice," and adopt no other measure, I admit there would be no cause to apprehend that war would ensue. But, sir, that would be a virtual abandonment of all our rights in that country, and might be regarded as an acknowledgment that we have no claim to any portion of it. Hence it has been found necessary to bring forward the concomitant measure to which I have alluded, extending our laws over that territory. It is the duty of every nation to extend its *exclusive* jurisdiction over its citizens or subjects, wherever they may be on its own

territory, except where the title to it is admitted to be in dispute.

Now, up to the time the President of the United States delivered his inaugural address, the United States have always admitted that the right to *exclusive* jurisdiction over the Oregon territory has been in dispute between this Government and that of Great Britain. This dispute, it is well known, led to the conventions of 1818 and 1827, which provide for the joint occupation of that territory by American citizens and British subjects, each to be governed by the laws of their own country, respectively. Under this convention, therefore, we stand justified in the eyes of all nations in refraining from the exercise of *exclusive* sovereignty or jurisdiction over any portion or all of that territory, however "clear and unquestionable" our title may be to it. But the moment the twelve months' notice expires, and this joint jurisdiction or occupation ceases, it will become our duty to ourselves, and to the national character and dignity of the United States, to extend the *exclusive* jurisdiction of our laws over that country, as far at least as it is occupied by American citizens. Therefore, sir, these are concomitant measures, the one absolutely involving the necessity of the other. Let gentlemen not flatter themselves that they can consistently vote for the notice, as proposed in the resolutions now before the committee, and withhold their support from the bill by which it is to be followed. That bill proposes to extend our exclusive jurisdiction not only over that portion of the territory where our citizens have taken up their abode, but over thousands of British subjects and many British forts, and over all that portion of the territory, comprising nearly one-half of it, which this Government has on several occasions, once very recently, offered to acknowledge as exclusively belonging to Great Britain. Now, Mr. Chairman, allow me to inquire what this Government and the people of the United States would say, if Great Britain should adopt similar measures?—if she should give us the notice, and propose at the expiration of twelve months to extend her sovereign authority over all Oregon, to the exclusion of our laws and the subjugation of our citizens? Sir, there is not a man in this country who would not cry aloud for war; who would not regard such an act on the part of Great Britain as equivalent to a declaration of war, to be met and resisted by all the energy and power of the Republic. If, under such circumstances, such would be the opinions of the people of this country, why should we suppose that the Government and people of Great Britain will quietly submit to our proceedings, if the measures

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which have been brought forward shall be consummated? Sir, they will not. No man of ordinary sagacity, I venture to say, thinks they will. They cannot, without being disgraced in the opinion of all Europe. Therefore, those who say or think that the adoption of these measures will not produce war, have not, in my judgment, well considered the subject, and have arrived at a most perilous conclusion. Some gentlemen seem to suppose, that if we give the notice, and show a bold front, as they are pleased to term it, that Great Britain will abandon the territory without a struggle; that she does not regard it as of sufficient value to justify her in going to war for it; that she only desires a fair pretext to relinquish it. And they seem to suppose that we have nothing more to do than to pass the notice and extend our laws over the country. It may be proper, sir, to remind those gentlemen of what Great Britain said on this subject in 1826. Mr. Gallatin, in his letter to Mr. Clay, dated London, November 16, of that year, says:

"Mr. Huskisson, amongst the reasons for taking up that subject first, [Oregon,] mentioned that it had for several sessions occupied the attention of Congress, and that it was not possible to foresee the effect which the measures they might adopt would have on the question, and on the friendly relations of the two countries. In a subsequent part of the conversation he said that the joint occupancy would cease in 1828 unless renewed, and the removal by the United States of any settlement made by British subjects would be considered as an act of aggression."

If Great Britain in 1826 would have regarded, as her negotiator expressly declared she would, the removal of any of her subjects from that territory by the authorities of the United States as an act of aggression, can it be supposed that she will now be less firm in the assertion of her rights? That, after having strengthened her title by twenty years more of uninterrupted occupation, and the number of her subjects and settlements in that country having probably quadrupled, and her power to protect and defend them having vastly increased, can it be supposed, by any one who is not blinded by party zeal, that she will quietly and ingloriously relinquish her rights in a territory to which she has adhered with so much tenacity for more than half a century? And yet those who are most zealous for the passage of these measures are leading the people to suppose that their tendency will be to do away with all subjects of discord, and leave the two countries in the quiet enjoyment of peace. But we are assured, that if, unfortunately, they should lead to war, we shall have no difficulty in conquering our ancient foe. We are to rush into the struggle without preparation, and almost without arms in our hands. We are told that republics never prepare for war; and gentlemen seem to apprehend, that if we stop to count the cost, or

estimate the consequences, the people may perhaps be roused to a sense of the calamities which must inevitably attend a contest that, if it comes, will be more terrible in its progress, and more disastrous in its results, than any which has been witnessed in modern times. But, sir, the declaration that republics never prepare for war, is as unfounded in fact, as it would be unwise in practice. There is not an instance recorded in history to which gentlemen can allude, to sustain them in the assertion, if we except the case of this Government previous to the war of 1812. The situation of this country then, was far different from what it is now. It was comparatively young and poor. A long course of aggression upon our commerce by the great contending Powers of Europe had, to a very considerable extent, ruined our commerce, which was still further crippled by the embargo and non-intercourse act. Our revenue from imports was diminished to the lowest point, and the internal resources of the country seemed to be paralyzed. Under these circumstances, the Government had not the means to prepare for war. But now the case is different. The wealth and resources of the country are ample. We have an overflowing treasury, and a revenue more than sufficient for all the wants of the Government. It is therefore the duty of those who press these measures with so much zeal, to prepare the country for the struggle into which we seem to be tending with so much rapidity; nor would there be any opposition on the part of the Whigs to the appropriations necessary for carrying it on. We deny the necessity, and denounce the intrigues that are carrying us to this dangerous issue, and will hold a terrible responsibility those who have been placed in charge of our public affairs. We will denounce the policy they pursue; but if, in their mad course for party ascendancy, they throw us into a struggle in arms with one of the most powerful nations of the earth, the party to which I have the honor to belong will not withhold their support from the necessary appropriations; nor will they be the last in the field of strife. Enough has been shown in the course of this debate to prove that this question has been stripped of its party character. Although, as I have said, it originated in party intrigues, and has derived all its importance from the schemes of designing politicians, it has now become a national question, and can never hereafter be of avail in any scheme of President-making. Such is the importance it has assumed in the eyes of the nation, and such are the momentous consequences involved in its decision, that it has swept away party lines and obliterated party distinctions. It has been shown, also, in the course

perhaps be roused this debate, that this, like all other great national questions, is inevitably attend a bringing to its support, or arraying in opposition to it, local interests in its progress, and questions and prejudices which seem likely to give it a tendency which has been with an impetus more powerful than could have been imparted by any declaration that repudiated it by its own intrinsic merit or importance. Those who are in fact, as it would regard themselves as particularly interested in our present instance recorded tariff laws, and dread as the greatest calamity any change or modification of them, and who think they see strong indications of government provisions in the doctrines advanced by the Executive of a strong disposition on his part to establish, as far as he may be able, a system of free trade, frankly avow, or many upon our commerce of them do, their willingness to see the country involved in a war, rather than permit the industrial pursuits of the people to be laid prostrate by a ruinous competition with the pauper labor of Europe. Sir, I think it would not be too much to assume that the manufacturing States of the Union would prefer a war to a system of free trade. Many of those who contributed to the elevation of the present Chief Magistrate, pledged themselves in the canvass of 1844 to a course of policy respectable. We have the tariff, which, if we are to judge from the tenor of his annual message, he is not likely to pursue. At the North he was declared to be in favor of a high protective tariff, while at the South he was understood to be in favor of free trade. Now, if we are to judge of the President's opinions from his annual message, he is more likely to favor the latter than the former in his course of policy. It is well known by whom he is surrounded in his cabinet councils: the very minister who conducts our foreign negotiations may be considered as favorably connected with the great iron interest of the State from which he comes. A war would be more sure protection to those interests than any law which could be passed by Congress. I make no charge against that or any other gentleman; but when I hear it declared by gentlemen from that section of the country that they would prefer a war to any considerable reduction of the tariff, I am bound, sir, to suppose it not impossible that their policy may in some degree be dictated by their party interests. In Pennsylvania, it is well known that Mr. Polk was represented as "a better tariff man than Mr. Clay,"—a question, and [Mr. CHARLES J. INGERSOLL. That was my argument.] while at the South he was understood to be in favor of free trade, or a low *ad valorem* rate of duties. How are these differences to be reconciled? You cannot have one tariff for the North and another for the South; fortunately or unfortunately, our laws extend over the whole country. Are we to be thrown

into a war to cover up these conflicting pledges, and to relieve those who made them from a just responsibility? I cannot say, nor do I pretend to say, that Mr. Polk authorized those pledges; but I do know that they were made, and every body knows that it is quite impossible to redeem or reconcile them by any course of policy which the Government may think proper to pursue. Many gentlemen have seemed to suppose the West would be benefited by a war. I do not charge that gentlemen on this floor would be actuated by such a motive; but it is undoubtedly true that a general idea prevails that the price of their breadstuffs would be augmented, and that the disbursements of money on the northern and western frontier would be beneficial to those sections of the Union; but a moment's reflection will be sufficient to show that they would suffer in common with all others. At the very outset the commerce of the lakes would be destroyed, their intercourse with the British colonial ports cut off, and they would be forced to rely solely on home consumption for a market for their produce. The market for cotton being in a very considerable degree destroyed, the planters of the South would turn their attention to the production of grain, and every thing necessary for their domestic consumption. The pork, bacon, and flour of the northwest would no longer find a market on the banks of the Mississippi. A very few figures will be sufficient to show those who entertain this idea—that war will supply a market for the breadstuffs of the West—that they are utterly mistaken. We will suppose, for example, that armies amounting to two hundred thousand men would be required in the field; at least one hundred thousand will be taken from our cities and large towns, persons thrown out of commerce and mechanical employments, who are now of the class called non-producers, or persons not engaged in agriculture. It is a large calculation to suppose that the other hundred thousand would be drawn from the farmers of the country. These two hundred thousand men would consume no more as soldiers than they do now; and the only change, as affecting our markets, as far as they were concerned, would be simply taking one hundred thousand from the producing class, who, it would be a liberal calculation to assume, now produce ten millions of bushels of grain per annum for market. This by no means amounts to the quantity of grain annually exported. It will therefore be perceived that, as a matter of mere calculation of dollars and cents, the grain growers of the West would be greatly the losers. Another idea equally erroneous has been advanced with respect to the effect of the British corn laws on

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the price of American grain. A repeal of those laws has been most anxiously desired by the wheat growers of this country, in the expectation that in that event we should supply the British market. A moment's consideration will show that this is a mistake. As the British corn laws now stand, they exclude, except in times of scarcity, corn from the continent, while our wheat and flour are admitted at a very low duty through the colonial ports. If the corn laws were repealed, we should lose this advantage, and be compelled to compete in the British market with the cheap grain from the Baltic, the Mediterranean, and Black Sea. To show that we cannot even now compete with the grain from those countries, it is only necessary to examine the following table from the British official returns:

Importations of wheat into Great Britain from the principal wheat countries for 1841, 1842, and 1843, in bushels, together with the sum total from each country.

Countries.	1841.	1842.	1843.	Total.
Russia - - -	498,205	1,824,688	269,368	2,592,261
Denmark - - -	1,915,279	617,656	565,248	3,098,183
Prussia - - -	7,134,400	5,938,065	5,311,000	18,383,465
Germany - - -	5,295,674	1,826,172	1,027,224	7,949,070
Holland - - -	815,964	73,979	6,864	896,507
France - - -	1,643,932	4,216,100	29,248	5,889,280
Italy and Island - -	901,600	4,878,597	24,840	5,805,037
North American Colonies -	2,333,354	3,729,690	2,790,504	6,853,278
United States - -	1,107,840	1,195,873	749,601	3,053,278
Other countries - -	866,859	1,816,340	272,407	2,955,606

I have been led into these remarks by the amendment offered to my resolution by the honorable gentleman from Illinois, (Mr. WENTWORTH,) which proposes, if I understand it, that this question shall not be arbitrated or settled until Great Britain opens her ports to American grain. It is said by physicians, that when an epidemic prevails, all other complaints which may have been prevalent tend to increase and aggravate its virulence. This seems in some degree to be the case in political questions, and especially with the one under consideration. Abolition, which seems ever ready to seize hold of the elements of discord, has joined in the hue and cry of "Fifty-four forty," "All Oregon or none," evidently with a hope that this cry will bring a war, and that war will produce emancipation. This wild fanaticism, which is of British growth, seems recklessly disposed to turn its arms against its foster-

mother for the purpose of achieving its unholy ends. Those who seem so utterly regardless of the wise and patriotic maxims which should govern all statesmen in questions concerning our foreign and domestic policy, are but imperfectly aware of the strength and capabilities of the South. That a war would be exceedingly injurious to the interests and prosperity of the Southern States, no one will pretend to deny; but that our institutions would be overturned, or emancipation be effected, no one acquainted with our condition and resources will for a moment believe. Of all sections of the Union, the Southern States are unquestionably more capable than any other section of sustaining a prolonged struggle in arms. This might be shown by a reference to historical facts and a critical examination of their domestic condition. Without going further into this branch of the subject, I will only add, that the poisoned chalice which fanaticism would thus prepare for the South, would be turned to its own lips, and that it would expire amidst the just execrations of all patriotic men.

Much has been said in this debate in regard to the annexation of Texas; that it has destroyed the balance of power in the Union, or given a preponderance of territory to the slaveholding States. Now, sir, I am not aware that any Southern statesman was actuated by any such motive in his advocacy of that measure. Texas had achieved her independence, and maintained it for the space of nine years. She was a sovereign and independent State. She had a right to do with herself as she pleased. Our people had gone there, carrying with them the spirit and establishing for their Government our free institutions. They were bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. They had left behind them all the ties of the domestic relations. They carried with them the sympathies of their friends and relatives. They were bound to us by all the recollections of our national glory and achievements, and feeling the same aspirations for the future as ourselves. They had no desire to remain a distinct and rival nation. They had no wish to throw themselves into the scale of European policy, for the purpose of creating a "balance of power" among Anglo-Saxon nations of the American continent. They desired to join the great family of States of the American Union; to unite their destiny with ours; to join us in the onward march of our civil institutions. Neither they nor their brethren in the South had one thought with respect to what has been called here "the balance of power." They had higher and nobler motives. While seeking their own glory and prosperity, they desired to confer reciprocal benefits upon their sister States. And it is unques-

only ends. Those patriotic maxims concerning our duty are aware of the fact that a war would be a disaster to the prosperity of the country; but that our intention to be effected, the sources will for a season, the Southern and any other section

This might be a critical examination, going further into the matter, that the poisoned seed for the South, it would expire

led to the annexation of power in territory to the slave, at any Southern in his advocacy of dependence, and was a sovereign with herself as dealing with them at our free institutions of our flesh. domestic relations. their friends and recollections of the same as had no desire to wish to throw for the purpose of the Saxon nations to join the great to their destiny. our civil institutions. South had one here "the balance of power." While desired to confer and it is unquestionably

true that, in a pecuniary point of view, the commercial and manufacturing interests of the North will be vastly more benefited by the annexation of Texas than the planting States of the South. But, sir, in that measure a great principle was involved with respect to the settlement of this continent by emigrants from the United States. That principle is, that wherever our people shall take up their abode in territory contiguous to ours, establish our free institutions, show themselves capable of wise self-government, and ask admission into this Union, it will unquestionably be the policy of this Government to receive them. This, sir, I conceive, will be the American policy, as contradistinguished from that which has been promulgated in Europe with respect to this continent—to create rival nations for the purpose of establishing a "balance of power," which will be equally pernicious to us as the "balance of power" in Europe has proved to be there.

This doctrine, I am aware, may be opposed by some, as leading to too great an extension of our political system. But who shall venture to place limits to modern invention, as applied to means of communication? Who can estimate the advantages to be derived from railroads and the magnetic telegraph? Who can say how distant the time may be when we shall communicate with the Pacific with greater facility, and in less time, than we did twenty-five years ago with New Orleans? Sir, I for one have no fears of evil consequences to result from the spread of our population and the extension of our institutions. I should be much more apprehensive of the establishment of rival and independent nations, who might be swayed by European policy, for the purpose of carrying out the idea of a "balance of power" upon this continent. The idea, which seems to prevail with many gentlemen at the North, that the annexation of Texas has destroyed the balance of power with respect to the slaveholding and non-slaveholding States, by the acquisition of territory, is entirely fallacious. If we assume the parallel of the 49th degree of north latitude, running to the Pacific, as our northern boundary, and the parallel of 36° 30' as the southern limit of the free States to the Rocky Mountains, and from thence on the parallel of 42° to the Pacific, we shall find (including the Territories of Iowa and Wisconsin) that the non-slaveholding States will have about eight hundred thousand square miles of territory beyond the States already admitted into the Union, and that the Southern or slaveholding States (including Texas) have but about two hundred and seventy-five thousand square miles.

[Mr. CULVER. But how is it now in the Senate?]

The gentleman asks, how it is at present in the Senate? In reply, I have to say, that you have only to admit Wisconsin and Iowa to establish an equality in that body from both sections of the Union, and thereafter the admission of non-slaveholding will be much more frequent than the admission of slaveholding States. Sir, I am in favor of protecting our citizens in Oregon, and extending to them all proper means of communication. I am in favor of a speedy adjustment of our claims in that territory; but I am in favor of its being done peacefully and honorably. A war would unquestionably either destroy or drive out our citizens from that country, and, if it did not deprive us of it altogether, would retard its settlement for many years. I am in favor of facilitating the emigration of our hardy pioneers. Let them, if they will, inhabit the shores of the Pacific. The increase of our population is so rapid that we shall soon carry our towns and villages not only to the base of the Rocky Mountains, but to the banks of the Columbia. A century is but a small space of time in the history of a nation; and yet, at the present ratio of increase, in the year 1945 there will be, if nothing happen to disturb our institutions, three hundred and twenty millions of people in the United States. And if you extend your view but twenty-five years further, there will be six hundred and forty millions of people united under one Government.

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